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FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SIDNEY SOBER, USDEL PREPCON

FOLLOWING SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO ADDIS ABABA AMMAN ABU DHABI
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TEHRAN FROM SANAA 09 APR 75:

QUOTE S E C R E T SANAA 827

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MASS, SA, YE
SUBJ: PRES. HAMDI ON INTERNAL YEMENI SCENE AND RED SEA
DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY: DURING APRIL 8 MEETING, PRESIDENT HAMDI EXPRESSED
CONCERN ABOUT GROWING LEFTIST INFLUENCE IN EHTIOPIA,
ERITREA, SOMALIA AND ADEN, DESCRIBING IT AS A THREAT TO
YEMEN'S MODERATE REGIME. HAMDI ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT
SAUDI SUPPORT FOR "TRADITIONALIST ELEMENTS" IN THE COUNTRY
WHO NOT CAPABLE OF FOCUSING ON REAL PROBLEMS WHICH YEMEN
FACES. HAMDI NOTED FEAR OF YEMENI MODERATES THAT DEVELOP-
MENTS IN INDO-CHINA PREFIGURE WEAKENING OF AMERICAN
RESOLVE DEFEND ITS FRIENDS AND INTERESTS AROUND THE
WORLD. HAMDI REQUESTED US ASSISTANCE IN CONVINC-
ING NEW SAUDI LEADERSHIP OF NEED TO SUPPORT YEMEN
GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN YEMENI INDIVIDUALS AS IMPORTANT
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BULWARK AGAINST SPREAD OF GROWING LEFTIST INFLUENCE IN
PENINSULA. HAMDI SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THE SPEED-UP
IN SAUDI-AMERICAN ASSISTANCE TO YEMEN'S ARMY IN ORDER
REDUCE ITS DEPENDENCE ON SOVIETS. HAMDI ALSO ASKED FOR

MORE MAJOR US PROJECTS IN YEMEN. RECOMMEND THAT AMBASSADOR AKINS BE AUTHORIZED APPROACH SAUDI GOVERNMENT AND CONVEY USG BELIEF OF NEED FOR USG AND SAUDI ARABIA GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO PRESENT YEMENI GOVERNMENT AS OFFERING BEST OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH STABLE PROGRESSIVE REGIME IN THIS COUNTRY AND TO HELP PROTECT BOTH SAUDI AND USG INTERESTS IN PENINSULA AND RED SEA AREA.

1. ON APRIL8, I HAD MY FIRST WORKING MEETING WITH IBRAHIM AL-HAMDI, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMAND COUNCIL, SINCE MY PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS ON JANUARY 21. (GENESIS OF MEETING WAS MY APRIL 3 COMMENT TO FOREIGN MINISTER ASNAG THAT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR ME TO SEE HAMDI FROM TIME TO TIME FOR A GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS.)

2. AFTER AN INITIAL EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, HAMDI QUICKLY GOT DOWN TO BUSINESS, ASKING ME WHAT I THOUGHT OF THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA. I TOLD HIM THAT WHILE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO SEE WHICH WAY THE NEW REGIME IN ADDIS ABABA IS GOING THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED ABOUT:

A. GROWING LEFTIST INFLUENCE IN ADDIS ABABA, AND

B. THE POSSIBILITY THAT ETHIOPIA MIGHT BREAK UP SHOULD THE ERITREAN INSURGENCY BE SUCCESSFUL. I CONTINUED THAT THE USG HAS DECIDED TO ACCEDE TO ETHIOPIAN REQUESTS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE BECAUSE OF OUR LONG MILITARY ASSOCIATION WITH THE ETHIOPIAN ARMY AND BECAUSE WE WISH TO MAINTAIN A CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH THE NEW ETHIOPIAN REGIME. AT THE SAME TIME WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT LEFTIST AND EXTREMIST INFLUENCE WITHIN THE ERITREAN INSURGENCY. HAMDI SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE NEED TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE ETHIOPIAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BUT HE TOO IS WORRIED ABOUT GROWING LEFTIST INFLUENCE BOTH IN ADDIS ABABA AS WELL AS IN ERITREA.

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3. HAMDI THEN ASKED HOW THE USG VIEWS THE SITUATION IN SAUDI ARABIA. I REPLIED THAT WE HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE SMOOTH TRANSITION FOLLOWING KING FAISAL'S DEATH AND HAVE INITIALLY CONCLUDED THAT KING KHALIS WILL REIGN WHILE CROWN PRINCE FAHD WILL RULE. HAMDI AGREED THAT PRINCE FAHD APPEARS TO BE THE STRONG MAN IN SAUDI ARABIA BUT EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT WITH THE DEATH OF KING FAISAL SAUDI ARABIA HAS LOST THE FIRMNESS OF KING FAISAL VIS-A-VIS THE GROWING LEFTIST INFLUENCE IN ETHIOPIA, SOMALIA, ERITEA AND, OF COURSE, SOUTH YEMEN.

4. HAMDI CONTINUED THAT THE SAUDIS SHOULD APPRECIATE THAT A STABLE, MODERATE AND PROGRESSIVE NORTH YEMEN

IS A MAJOR DEFENSE LINE FOR SAUDI ARABIA AGAINST THE SPREAD OF LEFTIST EXTREMISM IN THE PENINSULA. HE NOTED THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME THE LEFTISTS ARE CONCENTRATING ON OMAN AND YEMEN. OMAN, HOWEVER, IS FORTUNATE IN POSSESSING ITS OWN MATERIAL RESOURCES BUT YEMEN MUST DEPEND ON ITS FRIENDS. WHILE GRATEFUL TO SAUDI ARABIA AND TO OTHER SISTERLY ARAB STATES AS WELL AS THE UNITED STATES FOR ASSISTANCE, YEMEN IS STILL A POOR BACKWARD COUNTRY WITH A PEOPLE EASILY INFLUENCED BY LEFTIST PROPAGANDA AND PROMISES.

5. HAMDI NOTED THAT THE SAUDIS SHOULD ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND THAT YEMEN IS THE MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY IN THE PENINSULA AND THAT EVEN IN SAUDI ARABIA THERE ARE OVER A MILLION YEMENIS. THIS LARGE BUT POOR POPULATION CAN PLAY BOTH A POSITIVE AS WELL AS A NEGATIVE ROLE IN THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PENINSULAR DEPENDING ON HOW IT SEES ITS FUTURE. AT THE PRESENT TIME IN YEMEN THE TRADITIONALISTS ARE BEING SUPPORTED BY THE SAUDIS. THE FORMER, HOWEVER, DO NOT HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT THE REAL PROBLEMS IN YEMEN ARE BUT RATHER ARE FOCUSING ON SUCH MINOR IRRITANTS AS THE ALLEGED SPREAD OF ALCOHOL AND THE PRESENCE OF MOVIE HOUSES. HAMDI CONTINUED THAT IF THE YEMENI POPULATION SEES THAT ALL THE SAUDI SUPPORT FOR THE TRADITIONALISTS IN YEMEN IS NOT RESULTING IN ANY MEANINGFUL PROGRESS, THE YEMENI SECRET

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PEOPLE WILL NATURALLY BECOME DISCOURAGED AND WILL TURN TO THOSE WHO PROMISE THEM A BETTER LIFE. HAMDI EMPHASIZED THAT HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF A TRADITIONALIST BUT THAT THE TRADITIONAL WAY DOES NOT ALWAYS HAVE THE SOLUTIONS FOR THE PROBLEMS OF TODAY.

6. HAMDI URGED THAT THE USG TALK TO FAHD WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS A MAN OF CONSCIENCE AND INTELLIGENCE AS WELL AS TO PRINCE SULTAN IN ORDER TO CONVINCE THEM THAT SAUDI ARABIA SHOULD SUPPORT YEMEN AS A GOVERNMENT AND NOT AS INDIVIDUALS. HAMDI ADMITTED THAT THE YEMENI GOVERNMENT HAS MANY FAILINGS DUE TO THE LACK OF CADRE AND OF INFRA-STRUCTURE BUT THAT THE SAUDIS SHOULD FUNNEL THEIR AID THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT AND NOT THROUGH INDIVIDUALS, AS HAS OFTEN BEEN THE CASE THUS FAR.

7. I TOLD HAMDI THAT WHILE REALIZING THREE MONTHS IS ONLY A SHORT TIME I HAVE BECOME CONVINCED THAT YEMEN'S FUTURE STABILITY AND PROGRESS DEPEND ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MODERATE AND THE CONSERVATIVE FORCES IN THE COUNTRY BECAUSE THEY ARE TRULY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEMENI PEOPLE. I OPINED THAT, PERHAPS, ONE REASON FOR THE FAILURE OF ALL OUR ASSISTANCE TO VIET NAM OVER THE LAST DECADE OR SO HAS BEEN DUE TO THE LACK OF

COHESION AMONG THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS MAKING UP THE GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY OF THAT COUNTRY. I POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT IN COUNTRIES LIKE GREECE AND TURKEY, AS WELL AS IN SOUTH KOREA WHICH WE HAD ALSO MASSIVELY HELPED, THE GOVERNMENTS THERE HAD SUCCEEDED AGAINST LEFTIST THREATS BECAUSE THERE HAD BEEN GENERAL COHESION AMONG THE LEADERSHIP AND AN IDENTIFICATION OF THAT LEADERSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE AND THEIR ASPIRATIONS.

8. HAMDI AGREED AND SAID THAT HE BELIEVES THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL "SINCERE YEMENIS TO WORK TOGETHER AT THIS TIME. HE ADDED THAT IT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR THE YEMENI TRADITIONALISTS TO COOPERATE WITH THE "YOUTH OF YEMEN" BECAUSE IN THE LONG RUN IT WILL BE THE FORMER WHO WILL LOSE MORE THAN THE MODERNIZING YOUTH, SHOULD THE LEFT TAKE OVER. I AGREED WITH HIM AND INDICATED THAT I HAD MADE THE SAME OBSERVATION TO
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SOME OF MY YEMENI FRIENDS OF CONSERVATIVE PERSUASION INCLUDING SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR (PRES. OF THE CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY WHOM I HAD SEEN A WEEK OR SO AGO. HAMDI SMILED AND THANKED ME FOR THE SUPPORT WHICH THE USG HAS CONSISTENTLY GIVEN TO THE MODERATE AND MODERNIZING ELEMENTS OF THE COUNTRY. I TOLD HIM THAT AS A REPUBLIC WHICH HAD GONE THROUGH EQUALLY DIFFICULT DAYS IN ITS EARLY HISTORY, THE US CAN SYMPATHIZE WITH THE PROBLEMS WHICH YEMEN IS FACING WHILE IT TRIES TO ESTABLISH A STABLE FORM OF GOVERNMENT THOROUGHLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS WHICH MAKE UP YEMENI SOCIETY. I TOLD HIM THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT YEMEN'S GOVERNMENT UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP AND PROMISED HIM THAT I WOULD CONVEY HIS VIEWS TO MY GOVERNMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

9. HAMDI POINTED OUT THAT THE YEMENI GOVERNMENT IS THOROUGHLY APPRECIATIVE OF ALL US ASSISTANCE WHICH HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES WHICH THE USG FACES. HAMDI EXPRESSED THE OPINION, HOWEVER, THAT THE USG MIGHT CONSIDER FURTHER ASSISTANCE TO THE YEMEN PARTICULARLY TO THOSE PROJECTS WHICH WOULD HAVE AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON THE YEMENI PEOPLE WHOM HE CHARACTERIZED AS EASILY INFLUENCED BECAUSE OF THEIR LONG ISOLATION FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD. HE NOTED FOR EXAMPLE THAT EVERYONE IN YEMEN KNOWS OF THE CHINESE ROADS AND HOSPITALS AS WELL AS SIMILAR SOVIET PROJECTS. FEW YEMENIS ARE AWARE OF ANY MAJOR AMERICAN PROJECTS. I POINTED OUT TO HIM THAT A FEW DAYS AGO AMERICAN EXPERTS HAD ARRIVED TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS FOR A TEN-MILLION DOLLAR LOAN TO EXPAND THE TAIZ WATER SYSTEM. I ALSO TOLD HIM WE ARE CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY FOR

NEXT FISCAL YEAR OF A FIVE-MILLION DOLLAR PROJECT TO INSTALL POTABLE WATER SYSTEMS IN FIVE SMALL CITIES IN YEMEN. HAMDI EXPRESSED HIS AWARENESS OF THESE PROJECTS AND ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR IMPORTANCE BUT REITERATED HIS HOPE THAT THE USG COULD GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO AT LEAST ONE PROJECT WHICH MIGHT HAVE A MORE "TANGIBLE" IMPACT.

10. HAMDI ALSO EXPRESSED A CONCERN ABOUT THE STATE OF
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READINESS OF THE YEMENI ARMY WHICH HE SAID "LACKS EVERYTHING". HE NOTED IN THIS REGARD THAT OVER THE LAST MONTH OR SO THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN TERRORISM IN THE SOUTHERN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. HE ADMITTED THAT SOME OF THESE ACTS MAY BE DUE TO LOCAL CONDITIONS BUT INDICATED THAT EXTREMISTS IN SOUTH YEMEN WERE BEHIND SOME OF THESE INCIDENTS AS WELL. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE AGAIN THAT THE USG COULD PERSUADE THE SAUDIS TO MOVE FASTER ON THE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM ON WHICH THE SAUDIS AND THE US EXPERTS HAVE ALREADY AGREED. HE ADDED THAT THE YEMENI ARMY WISHES TO REDUCE ITS DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIETS BUT IT CANNOT ACCOMPLISH SUCH A MOVE UNLESS IT IS ASSURED OF A RELIABLE SUPPLY ALTERNATIVE.

11. FINALLY, HAMDI COMMENTED THAT MODERATES IN YEMEN ARE PRESENTLY CLOSELY FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS IN INDO-CHINA AND MANY OF THEM ARE NOW WONDERING IF USG WILL DEMONSTRATE AN EQUAL LACK OF CONCERN ABOUT ITS FRIENDS AND INTERESTS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. HE CONCLUDED THAT IF USG REALLY CARES ABOUT ITS INTERESTS IN THE RED SEA AREA IT WILL ACT PROMPTLY AND IMPRESSIVELY. OTHERWISE, EXTREMISTS IN THIS AREA WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VACUUM TO STEP IN AS THEY HAVE ALREADY DONE IN THE FAR EAST. I ASSURED HIM THAT USG VALUES ITS INTERESTS IN THE RED SEA AND PARTICULARLY ITS FRIENDSHIP WITH YEMEN'S MODERATE LEADERSHIP. I CITED PRESIDENT FORD'S RECENT LAS VEGAS SPEECH AS AN EXAMPLE OF AMERICA'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT ITS FRIENDS AND ALLIES AROUND THE WORLD. HAMDI REPLIED THAT HE APPRECIATED THESE ASSURANCES BUT THAT WORDS MUST ALSO BE ACCOMPANIED BY DEEDS.

12. COMMENT: HAMDI WAS RELAXED, ARTICULATE, EXTREMELY FRIENDLY AND CONVEYED THE IMPRESSION OF A MAN SURE OF HIS MISSION. HE APPEARED SINCERELY WORRIED HOWEVER, ABOUT THE RISE OF LEFTIST INFLUENCE IN THE RED SEA AREA AND THE THREAT WHICH THIS POSES TO YEMEN. IT WAS ALSO OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS CONVEYING TO ME HIS DEEP CONCERN AND THAT OF HIS COLLEAGUES ABOUT SHORT-SIGHTED SAUDI SUPPORT FOR YEMEN'S TRADITIONAL SHAIKHS WHO, WHILE A POWER IN THE COUNTRY, ARE NONETHELESS OFTEN
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A ROAD-BLOCK TO YEMEN'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. (EMBASSY PREPARING SEPTTEL DESCRIBING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS REGARD.) HAMDI EXPRESSED HIS HOPE SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE AND I WOULD SEE ONE ANOTHER REGULARLY, STRESSING THAT "MY OFFICE, MY HOUSE AND MY HEART ARE OPEN TO YOU". AS I MENTIONED ABOVE, THIS IS MY FIRST TETE-A-TETE WITH HAMDI AND I AM IMPRESSED WITH HIS REASONABLE, MODERATE AND WELL-THOUGHT-OUT GRASP OF YEMEN'S INTERNAL SITUATION AS WELL AS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEVELOPMENTS IN YEMEN AND IN THE SURROUNDING AREA. IN THIS REGARD, I HAVE BEEN EQUALLY IMPRESSED BY MOST OF THE OTHER TOP MEMBERS OF THIS GOVERNMENT WHOM I HAVE THUS FAR MET AND BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A GROUP OF MEN WHO REPRESENT AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH YEMEN AND THE UNITED STATES AND WHO, THEREFORE, SHOULD BE FULLY SUPPORTED.

13. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT AMBASSADOR AKINS BE AUTHORIZED TO DISCUSS THE YEMENI SITUATION WITH CROWN PRINCE FAHD EMPHASIZING (A) THE USG BELIEF THAT THE PRESENT YEMENI GOVERNMENT REPRESENTS THE BEST CHANCE FOR BOTH SAUDI ARABIA AND THE US TO ESTABLISH A MODERATE PROGRESSIVE AND STABLE REGIME IN YEMEN; (B) SAUDI ARABIA CHANNEL ITS SUPPORT FOR YEMEN THROUGH THE YEMENI GOVERNMENT AND NOT THROUGH INDIVIDUALS WHO FREQUENTLY USE SAG SUPPORT FOR PERSONAL BENEFIT; AND (C) SAUDI ARABIA BEGIN TO MOVE QUICKLY TO IMPLEMENT THE MODERNIZATION OF YEMEN'S ARMY IN FACT OF GROWING LEFTIST INFLUENCE IN THE SOUTHERN RED SEA REGION.

14. MISSION WILL STUDY POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL "IMPACT PACKAGE" AND WILL DISCUSS LATTER DURING AA/NESA NOOTER APRIL 16-21 VISIT TO YEMEN. SCOTES UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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